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Mississippi Notebook

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MISSISSIPPI NOTEBOOK

By TOM ETHRIDGE



ABOUT MOB VIOLENCE

FBI agents have swarmed into Mississippi for their internationally-publicized investigation of the supposed lynching of a Negro rapist, spirited from the jail at Poplarville by a band of masked men.

On the other hand, the federal government apparently has shown no official concern over mob violence and lynching in Kentucky — perhaps because the victims there were white instead of colored.

There are different kinds of mob violence. One, of course, is the type that appears to have taken place in Mississippi over the past weekend.

Another kind of mob violence is the beating and killing of law-abiding citizens who happen to incur the wrath of labor union terrorists. This sort of thing has happened in various states but more lately in Kentucky.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In a penetrating editorial, the Tampa, Fla., Tribune has pointed out that those who are loudest in fighting for "civil rights" are very careful when it comes to choosing their battlegrounds. Written before the Poplarville episode, the Tampa editorial says:

"Up in the strife-torn coal mining country of southeastern Kentucky, two violent incidents have occurred in recent weeks which, had they a racial angle, would have the Civil Liberties Union frothing and the Humphrey-Douglas-Javits-Cellar axis demanding all manner of new laws.

"The United Mine Workers have struck the Kentucky coal mines. . . Woodrow Smith, a non-union mine operator, was set upon by a gang of UMW pickets near his mine at Stinking Creek and shot to death. . .

"AMOUNTED TO LYNCHING"

"This amounted to lynching a man because he sought to exercise his constitutional right to use his own property — yet it has not raised a ripple among the crusaders for 'civil rights'.

"James Otis Adams of Dan-gola, a truck driver who worked as a guard at a non-union mine, was killed while exchanging shots with a gang of pickets who tried to drag him from his truck.

"This, too, was nothing more than a mob crime against a citizen exercising his lawful right to work. Yet we have heard no cries from 'civil rights' crusaders for state or federal action to protect Kentucky's non-strikers from the lynch gangs." (End quote from Tampa Tribune editorial.)

STRANGE SITUATION

Two wrongs never make a right. One form of lawlessness does not justify another form. Nevertheless, "civil rights" promoters are rather inconsistent. When a Negro is reportedly lynched in Mississippi, they call it a mockery of justice creating a bad impression overseas and giving the Communists more propaganda ammunition.

But they deem it of little consequence, and certainly no immediate business of the federal government, when law-abiding citizens are terrorized and mobbed by unionist goons in Kentucky and other states.

This indicates that "civil rights" crusaders attach more importance to an accused rapist's right to a fair trial and due process of law in Mississippi, than to the right of a peaceful citizen to live and support his loved ones by honest toil in Kentucky.

What does "world opinion" think of this "democratic concept"? Is it not good ammunition for Red propagandists? And a mockery of "equal justice"?

HERE AND THERE

Mob violence in Kentucky can never excuse mob violence down here. Still, in Mississippi's favor, it can be said that such action here has been swiftly condemned by our state leadership. Our Governor has wasted no time in marshaling the full machinery of law enforcement against lawlessness.

It has been quite different in Kentucky. Governor Happy Chandler waited over a month before acting to insure law and order for his roit-torn coal mining area. He delayed because it is politically dangerous to antagonize the powerful John L. Lewis machine. Thus, law was subordinated to selfish politics.

HARD TO UNDERSTAND

No "civil rights" champion has denounced Governor Chandler's tardiness in protecting American citizens, nor has there been any blanket condemnation of all Kentuckians and Kentucky justice. Washington has yawned and looked the other way — directly at Poplarville, Mississippi.

This one regrettable lynching could be enough to bring about sterner "civil rights" legislation to hamstring the South. Still, no amount of mob violence in labor disputes can make Congress impose effective curbs against goon terrorism.

It is a curious situation, filled with baffling inconsistencies.

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A STRANGE PARADOX

The most effective cure for a disease is to eliminate its cause. This truth is recognized by intelligent leaders and citizens. Still, there has been no progress toward eliminating the major cause of lynching — a form of moral disease in the United States.

Strangely enough, while lynching has virtually disappeared from the American scene in recent years, there has been a steady increase in brutal murders and rapes — two major causes of lynching.

TUSKEGEE STATISTICS

After the deplorable episode at Poplarville, the Associated Press circulated statistics on lynching as compiled by Tuskegee Institute, a Negro college in Alabama. A total of 4,733 persons have died from mob action since 1882.

During the present generation, however, lynchings have rapidly declined. In the past 10 years, the average has been less than one lynching a year, even if one accepts Tuskegee figures as being reliable.

SUBJECT TO QUESTION

Tuskegee Institute statistics are subject to challenge, because the Negro school has a questionable method of deciding what constitutes a lynching.

In Mississippi, for example, a Negro was shot to death by an unknown person on the streets of Brookhaven in broad daylight during 1955. Tuskegee officially classed this as a lynching.

In 1957 at Philadelphia, Pa., a gang of Negroes waylaid a university student and stomped him to death on a public street. Tuskegee Institute did NOT class this as a lynching. These two cases are merely random examples of Tuskegee's inconsistency. There have been numerous killings of whites by groups of Negroes, yet these have not gone into the Tuskegee records as lynchings.

OFFICIAL FBI REPORTS

Tuskegee Institute apparently does not keep records of criminal attacks on women in this country, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation does.

Here is the official FBI box score on reported rapes in recent years, the number of which has steadily increased throughout the United States:

Year	Reported Rapes
1949	16,380
1950	16,580
1951	16,800
1952	17,240
1953	17,900
1954	18,030
1955	19,100
1956	20,300
1957	21,080

(Official FBI Crime Reports, as listed in the World Almanac.) These figures make no mention of race.

DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

White leadership has been vigorous in condemning lynching and in trying to stamp out this form of crime. The success of these efforts over the years is self-evident, by Tuskegee Institute's own figures.

Negro leadership seems largely indifferent to the fact that colored rapists are becoming increasingly numerous and active. The number of crimes they commit is far out of proportion to America's colored population.

Roy Wilkins, NAACP official in New York, is quoted as making this statement Sunday in connection with the Poplarville affair: "The NAACP takes a dim view of rape charges brought by white women against Negro men in rural communities."

Is this attitude helpful in stamping out the crime of lynching? Does the entire responsibility rest with white leadership?

A TWO-HEADED COIN

It is to the best interest of both races that a concerted effort be launched to make American homes and streets safer for women, white and colored.

Admittedly, shameful crimes are committed against colored women by white brutes. The record of justice is certainly not perfect in this respect.

However, white people generally ostracize and condemn members of their race who assault Negroes. This is not true of the colored people, who often bestow sainthood and martyrdom on rapists merely because they are colored.

Lynching is an ugly thing and it must be stamped out. But we will never be completely safe from lynchings so long as attacks on women occur and horrible murders are committed.

Lawlessness is a two-headed coin.